

**Quarterly Report**  
**ROMANIA: POLITICAL PARTY EXCHANGE PROGRAM**  
**USAID Grant No. 186-0021-G-00-9110-00**  
**January 1 to March 31, 2000**

**I. SUMMARY**

In this quarter, crises among and within ruling coalition parties continued to undermine further their cohesion and, in some cases, weaken their ability to prepare for upcoming local elections. The Peasants' Party (PNTCD) suffered a number of defections in January after former Prime Minister Radu Vasile resigned from the party and formed the new National People's Party (PPR). Defense Minister Victor Babiuc's resignation in March triggered a standoff between the Democratic Party (PD) and its coalition partners, PNTCD and the National Liberal Party (PNL), over the conditions of Babiuc's replacement, with the PD threatening to leave the coalition in protest.

Romania's political instability is a result of an inability among political leaders to compromise and build consensus. Winner-take-all attitudes are common among the older generation of politicians who continue to monopolize party leadership positions. NDI concluded that an effective way to promote change and strengthen political parties is to help young party members assume higher profiles within their respective organizations. Through work-study missions to the U.S., the Political Party Exchange (PPE) program provides young political leaders with election-related and party organizing skills to prepare them for active political participation. Forthcoming local, parliamentary and presidential elections offer participants the opportunity to implement the skills they learn and to gain recognition from their party leaders.

During this quarter, NDI accomplished the following activities:

- Completed the candidate selection process for the second work-study mission
- Conducted the second work-study mission from March 2 to 16
- Organized voter contact training from March 22 through 27 with six major parties

**II. BACKGROUND**

Romania's transition to democracy continues to suffer from political instability. A complicated power-sharing arrangement among the ruling coalition parties has generated conflict over the allotment of ministerial positions. Disputes over such key legislation as privatization and land restitution have slowed economic reform and have periodically threatened the coalition's existence.

Two major consequences of Radu Vasile's dismissal as prime minister in December have been a renewed focus on economic reform by Romania's new Prime Minister Mugur Isarescu and a hemorrhaging of the Peasant Party's (PNTCD) ranks. A new tax system that raises the value-added tax by eight percent on many consumer goods is seen as a positive move toward compliance with European Union standards; however, it is increasingly difficult for average Romanians to make ends meet.

In January, 10 PNTCD deputies defected to Vasile's newly formed National People's Party, undercutting the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR) electoral alliance's majority in parliament.<sup>1</sup> That incident set off a struggle for control over the CDR between the Peasant Party and its partner, the National Liberal Party (PNL), and has resulted in PNL running on a separate ticket in the June local elections. Later in January, PNTCD experienced further defections with the loss of the mayor of Bucharest and three senators. The hemorrhaging in the PNTCD's party ranks has severely weakened its ability to organize for upcoming local and national elections.

In March, the Democratic Party threatened to pull out of the governing coalition if its candidate for minister of defense, Sorin Frunzaverde, was not unconditionally approved. Former PD Vice President and Minister of Defense Victor Babiuc resigned from the party in February, citing party President Petre Roman's heavy-handed leadership as the reason, but refused to relinquish his ministerial post. Although Babiuc finally resigned as defense minister in March, PNTCD and PNL attempted to pressure the Democratic Party into signing a protocol committing the party's support of several economic reform measures before agreeing to Frunzaverde's appointment. With the threat of the coalition collapsing and the negative impact the crisis was having on Romania's relationship with the European Union (EU), PNTCD and PNL relented.

### **III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

The Political Party Exchange program's training centers around four work-study missions to the United States over a two-year period, with each mission having a specific theme. Multipartisan groups of delegates take part in interactive training workshops, site visits and observation activities that focus on election-related and party organizing skills. During this quarter, NDI organized the second work-study mission, which centered on voter contact and fieldwork.

#### *Second Work-Study Mission*

Selection Process – Applications for the voter contact and fieldwork mission were distributed in early December 1999, and the deadline was set for January 18. NDI received 48 applications, which was significantly less than the 125 it received for the first work-study mission; however, the applicants on average were more experienced than those in the first round.

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<sup>1</sup> The departure of ten deputies cut the CDR's lead from 198:145 to 188:155; the main opposition party, PDSR, now has the largest parliamentary group with 80 deputies.

NDI interviewed 16 applicants, evaluating them on their command of electoral issues, communication skills, and the English language. Twelve finalists were selected (six women and six men), of which eight were from regions outside of Bucharest.<sup>2</sup> The breakdown of applicants and participants according to party affiliation is as follows:

<b>Party</b>	<b>Applicants</b>	<b>Participants</b>
National Liberal Party (PNL)	13	3
National Peasant Party – Christian Democrats (PNT-CD)	6	3
Social Democracy Party of Romania (PDSR)	9	2
Democratic Party (PD)	9	2
Democratic Union of Hungarians of Romania (UDMR)	2	1
National Alliance of Christian Democrats (ANCD)	6	1
Alliance for Romania (ApR)	1	0
Greater Romania Party (PRM)	1	0
Party of National Unity of Romanians (PUNR)	1	0

After the selection process, NDI sent each work-study delegate the following materials:

- a formal letter of acceptance into the program
- information on the medical exam required for the visa
- briefing information on the orientation in Bucharest
- a four-page logistics memo regarding the trip to the U.S.
- a worksheet on how to begin preparing their project proposals for consultations
- a copy of the commitment form signed by all participants

### *Visa Application Process*

NDI assisted delegates in obtaining J-1 educational exchange visas to the United States. Arrangements were made with World Learning for the delegates to take English-language and medical exams and to complete the requisite paperwork for the visas. All procedures took place in Bucharest, requiring eight delegates from outside of Bucharest to travel an additional 16 to 20 hours on three separate occasions.

### *Orientation*

Orientation for the first work-study mission was held the weekend before the delegates' departure to the U.S., which meant they had to travel to Bucharest, return home and come back to Bucharest again for their flight to the United States. To save time and money, orientation for the delegates of the second mission was held in Bucharest on February 29 and March 1.

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<sup>2</sup> In the program workplan, NDI defines regions outside of Bucharest as requiring a minimum of one-hour travel time from Bucharest.

The orientation was held at the U.S. Information Resource Center. Following opening remarks and introductions, NDI Resident Representative Shannon O’Connell reviewed the two-week study mission itinerary and discussed logistical issues with the delegates. Mary Cummins (NDI/Romania) and Stephanie Lynn (NDI/Serbia) gave presentations on the “secrets to successful campaigns” and writing a campaign plan respectively.

In the afternoon, Ms. O’Connell led a discussion of the U.S. primary system, with special emphasis on the Super Tuesday elections since the mission’s planned observation activities revolved around this particular set of primaries. To illustrate the complexity of the candidate selection system and to offer a feel of the U.S. presidential campaigns, the delegates viewed *The War Room*, a documentary on the 1992 Clinton-Gore campaign from the New Hampshire primary to the November election.

Delegates participated in two interactive sessions in the afternoon. The first was a question-and-answer exercise, comparing the U.S. and Romanian political systems. During the second session, delegates formed teams and were asked to organize a campaign staff structure and strategy for a fictitious candidate based on a devised scenario. International Republican Institute Romania Representative Ron St. John helped critique the plans.

The following day, five graduates of the first PPE study mission joined the delegates for an informal roundtable. A representative from the U.S. Embassy was scheduled to discuss the terms of the delegates’ visas to the United States but was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict. NDI representatives Shannon O’Connell and Stephanie Lynn conducted individual consultations with the delegates on their project proposals. It was clear from the consultations that several delegates were considering changing the focus of their projects based on what they had learned during the orientation.

### *Work-Study Mission*

NDI determined that it would be best to change the focus of the second study mission from communications and media relations to voter contact and fieldwork in order to take advantage of the upcoming Super Tuesday primaries. NDI believed the primaries would provide interesting opportunities for fieldwork observation and that it was likely both the Democratic and Republican candidates would be determined during the primaries, thus limiting future opportunities for fieldwork observation.

NDI selected Boston as the location for the first part of the mission based on the type of voter contact activities that were likely to occur, the scale of those activities and their appropriateness to the Romanian context, and the availability of trainers. While the team considered New York City, for example, as a possible venue, it was determined that the scale of election activities was too large to fit the Romanian context. Furthermore, since New York was a key primary state, this would make it more difficult to find available trainers.

The NDI Romania team spent February finalizing the itinerary, making logistical arrangements, and finding trainers in the Washington, DC and Boston areas. On March 1, Program Officer Claude Zullo and Program Assistant Nicole Charette flew to Boston to conduct last minute advance work prior to the delegation's arrival on the afternoon of March 2. The first half of the study mission took place from March 3 to 8 in Boston and the second half in Washington, D.C., from March 8 to 15.

Throughout the work-study mission, delegates participated in a series of election-related workshops. Workshop themes started with broad issues fundamental to fieldwork operations, such as election strategy and planning and direct voter contact, and then moved to more focused themes, such as media relations, advance work, and public presentation skills. The following is a list of the study mission workshops in the order in which they occurred:

- Elements of Election Strategy – Boston political experts Andrew Upton, Dave Vaughn, Owen Eagen, Les Bernal discussed developing an election strategy by using polls and other research methods to target voters.
- Overview of Election Planning – Former candidate for Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Warren Tolman and election manager Kenneth Brown addressed drafting an election planned based on a candidate or party's election strategy.
- Direct Voter Contact – Elections strategist Doug Rubin and Massachusetts State Representative Peter Koutoujian discussed such types of voter contact activities as door-to-door canvassing, leafleting, and phone banking and effective ways to employ them in elections. Rubin and Koutoujian also conducted role-playing exercises with the delegates, offering critiques and suggestions on how to talk with voters.
- Get Out the Vote Operations – Political expert Jim King reviewed planning for a Get Out the Vote operation and ways to mould it to Romania's 48-hour prohibition on campaigning.
- Labor and Grassroots Organizing – Massachusetts AFL-CIO Political Director Richard Rogers and union political organizer John Laughlin discussed the role unions play in U.S. elections, such as endorsing candidates and participating in grassroots voter contact through phone banking and canvassing.
- Negotiation Skills – Conflict resolution experts Dan Shapiro and Astrid Kleinhanns reviewed the fundamental principles of negotiation strategies based on the Harvard Negotiations Project methods and ran the delegates through negotiation role-playing exercises.
- Message Development and Delivery – Communications expert Tom Lindenfeld covered the main principles of message development, including simplicity and repetition, and the use of such research instruments as polls and focus groups to target political messages at voter groups.
- Media Relations – Media expert Willie Blacklow discussed the importance of building and maintaining relationships with the media, acquiring free media, handling the media during crises, and fielding difficult questions from reporters.

- Advance Work – Advance experts Maria Westfried and Chip Mann briefed the delegates on planning for large-scale events.
- Coordinated Election Strategy – Democratic Party activists Jill Alper and Joe Hanson talked about national and regional/local party organizations coordinating election operations on such issues as communication and resource distribution.
- Long-Term Party Planning – NDI Director of Political Party Programs Ivan Doherty discussed long-term planning activities, such as membership drives, fundraising and goal setting, that help strengthen political parties election efforts.
- Public Speaking and Interviewing – Media expert Michael Shannon reviewed the fundamentals of public speaking, such as volume and intonation, and tips for appearing on television. Mr. Shannon conducted mock camera interviews with several delegates before and after the training to demonstrate effective interviewing skills to the group.
- Training Presentation Skills – Democratic Party activist Heather Booth addressed the basics of designing an effective training session and enhancing effective presentation skills.
- Election Plan Writing – Brown-Tully Training Institute Director Bernard Craighead recapped the elements of writing a campaign and led the delegates through a mock election plan writing exercise. Delegates were expected to use the skills learned during the study mission.

While in Boston, delegates had the opportunity to observe a number of Super Tuesday voter contact activities with the Al Gore, Bill Bradley, and John McCain campaigns. These included both “hot” activities, such as leafleting, and “cold” activities, such as mass rallies. For example, the delegates attended rallies for candidates Gore and McCain, leafleting operations for Gore, and visibility stations for Bradley and Gore. As part of its morning debriefings with the delegates, the Romania team discussed the differences in effectiveness among the different types of activities and the differences in style among the three candidate’s campaign operations.

The delegates also attended a roundtable discussion in Boston on the U.S. presidential elections featuring political analysts Edmund Beard and Louis DeNatale (University of Massachusetts) and former Massachusetts Congressman Chet Atkins. Site visits were made to the Democratic National Committee, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, EMILY’s List, and the Maryland State Democratic Party office. Delegates were shown how the Democratic Party produces candidate television advertisements and public service announcements (PSAs), and they attended a presentation on the Women’s Vote Project at EMILY’s List.

Over the course of the mission, delegates had three individual consultations with political experts who provided them with practical suggestions for implementing electoral projects in Romania. The first consultation was held in Boston with NDI Director of Political Party Programs Ivan Doherty and external political experts Jack Walsh and Michael Kineavy. The second and third consultations took place in Washington, D.C.,

and were facilitated by Ivan Doherty, NDI Central and Eastern Europe Regional Director Deborah Alexander and political experts Kate Head, Pat Ewing, and Danny O'Brien.

### *Women in Politics*

From February 17 to 22, NDI Resident Representative Shannon O'Connell traveled to Budapest to take part in a training session for NDI-Serbia's conference, *Women, Politics, Action!*. At the suggestion of NDI Serbia Representative Stephanie Lynn, Adela Cristea participated in the conference. Ms. Cristea is a graduate of the first PPE work-study mission, currently heads the Peasant Party's (PNTCD) youth organization and is a candidate for local council in the city of Arad.

### *Voter Contact Training*

NDI organized in-country training with party youth organizations on voter contact with Irish Member of Parliament Brian Hayes from March 22 to 27. Hayes and O'Connell traveled to the cities of Timisoara, Cluj-Napoca, and Bucharest and held individual sessions with the youth wings of Romania's six main parties: PNTCD, PNL, PD, UDMR, PDSR, and ApR.

More than 250 party members participated in the weeklong training. Fifteen graduates of the first two study missions assisted with organizing their party colleagues for the events. The session had considerable impact due to Hayes' expertise and stature as the third youngest member of Ireland's parliament and as someone who won an election through a rigorous voter contact strategy in a district where his party went unrepresented for 10 years.

## **IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### *Work-Study Mission*

NDI has tracked the 24 graduates of the first two study missions. During this quarter, NDI recorded the following accomplishments and promotions by the program participants:

- *Stefania Paniatescu* (PNT-CD, Voter Contact and Fieldwork Mission) will be a candidate for the local council of Sanmartin, a village outside the city of Oradea. It is not yet clear what place she will hold on her party's list.
- *Adela Cristea* (PNT-CD, Campaign Management Mission) was selected by her party colleagues to take the first position on the party's list for local counselor in Arad. This virtually ensures that Adela will be elected to the local council in the June elections.
- *Dorian Branea* (PNL, Campaign Management Mission) organized what is being called the first transparent candidate selection process in the history of Romania.

After learning about the primary process in the United States, Dorian convinced party leaders to hold a public debate and secret ballot – by all interested party members – on the selection of PNL’s mayoral candidate for Timisoara. The candidate favored by party leaders was not selected, and the results of the vote were accepted.

- *Zsolt Nagy and Andrea Naphegyi* (UDMR, Campaign Management Mission) are organizing a series of primaries to select candidates for their party.
- *Dan Lazarescu and Adela Cristea* (PNT-CD, Campaign Management Mission) have worked to improve significantly relations between their party’s youth and student organizations. Lazarescu represents the PNTCD Student Organization and Cristea the party’s youth organization, and they became acquainted during the first work-study mission to the U.S. Relations between the two organizations have been highly strained, but through Lazarescu and Cristea’s efforts, cooperation between the two organizations is improving. For example, Cristea will host the annual student conference in her city of Arad next month.
- *Mirel Talos* (PNL, Campaign Management Mission) has been selected campaign manager for his party’s candidate for mayor of Bucharest.

In general, one of the more enduring results of the second mission is the personal friendships that developed among the delegates. This accomplishment is particularly impressive given Romania’s highly polarized political situation. Establishing these personal contacts will take on increasing significance as some or all of the delegates assume leadership positions in their respective parties, as personal connections are a critical ingredient in finding consensus on difficult and sensitive issues.

From an organizational perspective, NDI was able to improve the content, preparations and logistics of its study missions. Based on lessons learned from the previous study mission, NDI made its workshops more intensive by decreasing the number of workshops and more interactive through greater use of role-playing techniques. Both changes seemed to have a measurable impact on the quality of the workshops. NDI also made greater use of the debriefing session, having the delegates complete questionnaires in the evening and share their impressions of the previous day during breakfast.

### *Women in Politics*

Adela Cristea’s participation in NDI-Serbia’s training program represents an effort by NDI to leverage other programs in the region to assist in Serbia’s democratization. Ms. Cristea’s perspective on Romania’s democratic transition proved a valuable experience for her Serb counterparts given the regional context. The Serb delegates welcomed her eagerly and asked many questions about how Romania made the transition from dictatorship to democracy. Ms. Cristea remains in contact with a number



of the participants and plans to invite several of them to Arad to observe the local elections in June.

### *Voter Contact Training*

The high turnout for the training is indicative of the impact NDI is having on getting parties to consider election strategies to which they are unaccustomed, particularly those that require personal contact with voters. Political parties in Romania are generally convinced that mass media is the key to success at the polls, and current party strategies rely heavily on message delivery through the media. As a consequence, many voters have a distant and highly skeptical attitude toward parties. Getting parties to undertake such “hot” types of election activities as canvassing should improve their election results.

## **V. EVALUATION**

NDI elaborated the following three objectives for the PPE program this year: 1) to strengthen and employ the program’s participants’ election-related skills and knowledge in the forthcoming local and national elections; 2) to strengthen parties’ election efforts through the PPE participants’ skills and knowledge; and 3) to enable program participants to rise in stronger positions within their respective party structures after completing the election-related program work.

The clearest evidence that the delegates’ election-related skills were strengthened is in the development of their individual projects. Many transformed their projects from very theoretical ideas to more practical and implementable concepts, with written strategic plans for implementation. NDI expects both groups of delegates to implement the ideas and techniques they learned in the June 2000 local elections. Several of the delegates from the first study mission have begun to implement the ideas and techniques even before the local elections, as noted in the Results section.

The success of the voter contact training with Brian Hayes also indicates that NDI is having an impact with regard to the program’s second objective. Moreover, the efforts of several of the delegates to create more transparent candidate selection systems should help their parties select more electable candidates.

NDI continues to demonstrate the most success in achieving its third objective. Four of the 24 delegates were promoted over the past three months, three from the first mission and one from the second mission. Moreover, some of the successes reported, such as that of establishing candidate primary processes, contribute to those candidates gaining recognition within their parties.

NDI is also on track with its selection candidate goals, balancing considerations of party size versus the training needs of individual parties, regional diversity, and gender balance. Five of Romania’s six major parties were represented on the mission, with more slots being allotted to the larger parties. Two-thirds of the candidates were selected from

areas outside Bucharest, which is reasonably in line with the goal of 75 percent. Half of the candidates were women, corresponding to NDI's gender target.

## **VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

- NDI will hold an official debriefing and reunion of delegates from the second work-study mission on April 26. After the meeting, the group will travel to the U.S. Embassy for a meeting with U.S. Ambassador James Rosapepe.
- In April, NDI will organize voter contact training sessions with political party youth organizations in Arad, Oradea and Satu Mare. Training may also be scheduled in Iasi and Suceava in Moldova.
- NDI will continue to work with all PPE graduates on the implementation of their project proposals.
- NDI will develop a plan for the program immediately after the local elections. This may include an intensive in-country summer campaign school in July, depending on logistics, funds and program developments. NDI is examining the possibilities of a third work-study mission in August and more in-country campaign training in September.
- NDI's Romania staff may attend annual conventions and leadership elections of the Student's Organization of the National Christian Democratic Peasant Party and the Youth Organization of the National Liberal Party.